



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO **MANAGER'S REPORT**

DATE ISSUED: October 11, 2000 REPORT NO. 00-217

ATTENTION: Natural Resources and Culture Committee
Agenda of October 18, 2000

SUBJECT: Report on Ocean Monitoring

SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CITY COUNCIL.

BACKGROUND

The City of San Diego's Metropolitan Wastewater Department operates one of the most comprehensive ocean monitoring programs in the world. This program has historically been carried out in response to the regulatory requirements for the ocean disposal of treated wastewater. At the time of the first successful application for a waiver from secondary treatment, the San Diego City Council passed City Ordinance 0-18206 reaffirming its commitment to protection of the coastal ocean environment. The ordinance committed the City to the continuation of a comprehensive monitoring program irrespective of the regulatory requirements. The purpose of this report is to present the results of last year's monitoring efforts.

DISCUSSION

The attached Annual Receiving Waters Monitoring Report is the culmination of the ocean monitoring for Calendar Year 1999. The Ocean Monitoring Program is designed to assess the impact on the marine environment of wastewater discharged through the Point Loma ocean outfall. The major objectives of the program are to provide data which satisfy the requirements of the NPDES permit, demonstrate compliance with the California Ocean Plan, track movement and dispersion of the wastewater field, and identify any biological or chemical changes associated with the wastewater discharge. These data are used to document the effects of the discharge on water quality, ocean sediments and marine biota, and have been pivotal in the City's successful application for a 301(h) waiver from secondary sewage treatment. It is expected that these data will be equally important in future applications for renewal of the City's 301(h) waiver.

The monitoring program is divided into several elements. The water quality portion includes

sampling to detect the presence of bacteriological indicators of sewage contamination along the shoreline and in the adjacent offshore waters. Data for physical and chemical parameters (water temperature, transmissivity, dissolved oxygen, salinity, pH, oil and grease, and total suspended solids) are also collected. The benthic monitoring portion includes sampling and analysis of ocean sediments for physical and chemical parameters as well as population studies of the marine animals which inhabit the sediments. The trawl element of the program involves collecting fish in order to determine community composition. Additionally, bioaccumulation analyses are performed on fish collected at trawl and rig-fishing sites to determine the presence of chemical contaminants in fish tissues.

The study area centers around the discharge site and encompasses over 95 square miles. Shoreline monitoring extends south to Imperial Beach and north to Ocean Beach. The offshore monitoring includes an area on the coastal shelf from Imperial Beach to La Jolla and from the 30 ft depth contour seaward to a depth of 380 ft. Raw data, detailed descriptions of analytical and quality assurance methods, and a statistical interpretation of the data are compiled in reports which are submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency and the Regional Water Quality Control Board. The reports are also available for public review.

A description of the findings of the monitoring effort for 1999 is found in the executive summary of the attached document. We are pleased to report that there are no significant impacts on the marine environment which can be attributed to the discharge. The water in the Point Loma kelp bed, which is subject to the California Ocean Plan bacterial standards for water contact sports, was 100% compliant with those standards during 1999. Overall, there is no evidence of any negative impact on marine communities near the outfall. The high level of waste field dilution due to depth and current speeds has made naturally occurring oceanographic conditions the dominant factor in ocean environment changes near the Point Loma outfall.

CONCLUSION

The results of the ocean monitoring program verify that the City of San Diego's wastewater treatment and disposal system is performing as intended. As a result, the ocean ecology and resources are being protected. Additionally, the monitoring continues to validate the justification for the waiver from secondary treatment that allows San Diego to provide wastewater services and environmental protection at a reasonable cost to the ratepayer.

Respectfully submitted,

F. D. Schlesinger
Metropolitan Wastewater Department Director

Approved by: Frank Belock, Jr.
Deputy City Manager

SCHLESINGER/ACL

Attachment: 1. City of San Diego, 1999 Receiving Waters Monitoring Report, June 2000

Note: The attachment is not available in electronic format. A copy is available for review in the Office of the City Clerk.